



Florida House of Representatives

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FLORIDA HOUSE DEMOCRATS REJECT BUDGET

TALLAHASSEE, FL --- With thousands of Floridians out of work and families in dire need of help from their state government, Florida House Democrats unanimously rejected a proposed Fiscal Year 2009-10 state budget that fails to meet the people's needs.

The proposed budget slashes vital state programs, raises university tuition and taxes on the middle class, cuts public worker salaries, and broadens inequities in the tax structure owed to a decade of failed Republican leadership.

During debate, House Democrats offered these and other remarks:

House Democratic Leader Franklin Sands, D-Weston, said:

"I find it troubling that the Republican Party, which touts fiscal conservatism and family values, has crafted a state budget held together by smokers and gamblers and is balanced on the backs of hard working state employees and other middle-class Floridians."

House Democratic Leader Pro tempore Geraldine Thompson, D-Orlando, said:

"What (the Florida Legislature) should say is that it is shifting taxes from

those who can afford to buy planes and yachts to working people and the average Floridian.”

Representative Kelly Skidmore, D-Boca Raton, the Democratic Ranking Member of the House Appropriations Council on General Government & Health Care, said:

“This budget not only puts public health and our water supply at risk of contamination, but cuts an estimated 750 jobs by decimating the Inland Protection Trust fund, puts jobs at risk for thousands of Tri-Rail commuters because of stubbornness, eliminates hundreds of state positions on principle and cuts the pay of hundreds more, and forces schools to lay off untold numbers of teachers.”

Representative Ron Saunders, D-Key West, Democratic Ranking Member of the House Appropriations Council on Education & Economic Development, said:

“I compare this budget to a chocolate pie. It looks pretty good until you take a bite and find out it is made of mud.”

Representative Janet Long, D-St. Petersburg, said:

“My vote against this budget is my effort to protect against the process of back door negotiations, lack of transparency and openness...It is a very sad day when individuals in this chamber stifle good ideas in this very challenging economic environment.”

Representative Richard Steinberg, D-Miami Beach, said:

“This budget can best be described as one put together with bubble gum and Band-Aids...We are talking about short-term fixes instead of long-term solutions.”

Representative Audrey Gibson, D-Jacksonville, said:

“Numbers have no emotions, but the people who have to live with the numbers do...This is about how we value the people we serve.”

Representative Leonard Bembry, D-Greenville, said:

“I’m most concerned about cutting the salaries of 22 percent of our state employees. I take my hat off to state employees.”

Representative Darren Soto, D-Orlando, said:

“This budget makes the value call of favoring special interests over the constituents we are charged to represent.”

Representative Hazelle Rogers, D-Lauderdale Lakes, said:

“We have people in our districts who are waiting on these dollars. We must lead by example, but I’m not willing to cut state employee salaries when we are asking them to do more.”

Representative Michelle Rehwinkel Vasilinda, D-Tallahassee, said:

“For both Democrats and Republicans, it’s going to be very difficult to go home and face our constituents. My heart is breaking. We are moving backwards.”

Representative Mark Pafford, D-West Palm Beach, said:

“This budget will send caregivers to their death. This is no exaggeration. Without these services and Alzheimer’s respite services, 60 percent of caregivers will pre-decease their loved ones. We are sending caregivers to their graves because this budget cuts respite care another 5 percent, or 20 percent during this past calendar year.”

Representative Martin Kiar, D-Davie, said:

“We are playing Russian Roulette with our kids’ future. We may get the stimulus, and we may not. If we don’t, we may have to come back in a month.”

Representative James Bush III, D-Miami, said:

“This budget will hurt working families of this great state and their children. I encounter families who are living in their vans and in their cars, moving from one parking lot to the next because they don’t have a place to stay.”

Representative Rick Kriseman, D-St. Petersburg, said:

“The choices made and demonstrated in this budget are the wrong choices. They are choices that will not only negatively impact real people in a significant way, but they will financially impact this state for years to come.”

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